

Service Team Training CONFERENCE

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

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**SERVICE TEAM TRAINING
CONFERENCE
(About 2 Hours)**

OBJECTIVES:

- To acquaint volunteers with the role and responsibility of a Learning for Life service team
- To guide service team volunteers toward knowing what to look for and how to help an Explorer post or Learning for Life group.
- To make service team volunteers aware of the resources and services of their local Learning for Life office.
- To inspire service team volunteers to become active and informed.

MATERIALS FOR EACH PARTICIPANT:

Explorer Post New-Advisor Kit, No. 99-209.
Learning for Life Character Education Outcomes page 14.
Service Section, Learning for Life Executive Guidebook, No. 99-064.
What's In It For Youth flier from page 16.

MATERIALS FOR USE IN THE COURSE:

Monitor and VCR.
Flip Chart and Markers.
Learning for Life Executive Guidebook, No. 99-064.
Adult Explorer Leader Basic Training, Self-Study Course, No. 99-214
Copies for resale of *Explorer Leader Handbook, No. 34637A.*
Explorer Youth Fast Start Video, No. AV-09V028

LESSON PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Thoughtful study of the successes of Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups over the past few years indicates that one person makes the difference-- a concerned service team volunteer.

Although Learning for Life provides regular mailings, newsletters, conferences, and activities, regular person-to-person contact is the only effective way to provide the vital communications link necessary to the continuing success of an Explorer post or Learning for Life group.

Learning for Life and/or Exploring executives are assigned to the Learning for Life program. Their task is to recruit and train a team of volunteers to organize, train, and service posts and groups. The professional staff may be responsible for the success of a large number of posts and groups. Obviously, there is no way they can personally visit every post or group every month. Yet this frequent contact is vital to the health of a post and group--thus capable volunteers are recruited to form a Learning for Life service team. Each service team volunteer normally works with one to three posts or groups. Second only to a post Advisor or Classroom teacher, the most important and necessary role in Learning for Life administration is committed service team volunteers.

STRUCTURE

A variety of service team structures are found in Learning for Life divisions, districts, clusters, etc. How many posts and groups can a service team volunteer handle? Our rule of thumb is that one volunteer can effectively serve three posts or groups.

Obviously, we adapt the skill and dedication of the volunteer to the condition of the posts and groups. Assigning him or her two or three weak posts or groups that have to be reorganized is a big task. While a trained service team volunteer could probably handle five or six healthy posts or groups.

The service team may be structured on a geographic or cluster basis. For example, one person could service four posts or groups in a small town or geographic area. Someone working in the area could service three or four posts or groups in a downtown office building or industrial area. An FBI agent might

be the service team volunteer for law enforcement posts.

Review your Learning for Life Executive Guidebook (See Service Team organization chart).

**SERVICE TEAM
POSITION
DESCRIPTION**

Let's review the position description of the *Learning for Life* service team which supports the leadership, youth participants, and the program of Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups.

(Discuss each point - be sure the service team understands the methods used.)

Leadership

See to it that the post Advisor and group Classroom teacher is trained

Help the participating organizations replace lost or ineffective leaders when necessary.

Coach the Advisor on the election, training, and guidance of post officers.

**Youth
Participants**

Help each post or group recruit, enroll, and retain new youth participants by supporting the post's or group's planning efforts for their annual Fall Open House.

Guide the annual process of renewing the post or group.

Take steps to reorganize the post or group when needed.

Organize new posts and groups upon request.

Program

Help the Advisor and Classroom teacher use the tools, resources, and techniques to plan a quality post or group program.

Encourage the post Advisors to share program ideas at quarterly Advisor meetings and the Learning for Life program conference.

Keep the leadership informed about Learning for Life and national programs and resources that can strengthen the post's or group's program.

Assist the post or group in conducting and updating the program capability inventory.

Help the post or group find program resources and consultants, etc.

LEARNING FOR LIFE EXECUTIVE GUIDEBOOK

Handout Service Team Handbook. (Reproduce Service Section from the Learning for Life Executive Guidebook).

This is your "handbook" as a volunteer of the service team. It is designed to provide an introduction to the service team's mission, plan of action, and how to help your assigned Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups.

GETTING STARTED

How Do We Get Started? The service team volunteer could compare his or her responsibility to that of a family physician. New posts and groups are born, regular checkups are provided, a diagnosis is made of any post or group ills and action is taken to remedy them. Like the family doctor, the service team volunteer keeps close watch over the post's or group's health, learns what symptoms are good or bad, and knows where to get help when needed. The first step is to learn everything you can about your assigned posts and groups; how they were started, something of their history, the structure and purpose of their participating organization, and the nature of the post's and group's adult leaders.

First Contact with Post Advisors or Classroom Teacher

Next, make contact with the post Advisor or group Classroom teacher. A personal visit is more effective than a phone call. The first impression is very important. The service team volunteer's task is to HELP the post Advisor and group Classroom teacher, not create more work or seem to be checking up on the post or group. Start by getting the Advisor and Classroom teacher to discuss his or her plans for the post or group. Congratulate the Advisor and Classroom teacher on any achievements. Minimize problems until a friendly, trusting

relationship develops. Try to help the Advisor and Classroom teacher solve any immediate concerns. This will demonstrate that the service team's mission is to help.

Post or Group Visit

Next, visit the post or group - this can be a meeting, activity, officers' meeting, or post or group committee meeting. Try to keep a low profile. Avoid being identified as "someone from the Learning for Life office." Rather, find out what is going on and how you might help.

Review Post or Group Visit Guidelines and Post or Group Service Team Worksheet, "Service Section "Learning for Life Executive Guidebook."

What Do We Look For?

The best indicator of a good post or group program is attendance. Young adults of this age are quick to lose interest if the program is dull, fails to meet their interests, or is poorly organized. Look for evidence of advanced planning. Determine if the Advisor's relationship to the post officers encourages a team approach for a youth led program.

Has the Advisor set a date with the new post officers to conduct the Post Officers' Seminar? Find out if the post officers and Advisors have planned an annual schedule of meetings and activities during a post officers' seminar. Is the post or group committee informed and involved? How often you visit each post or group probably depends on what you find.

As you become aware of problems and concerns, try to solve them on the spot. If invited to join the post or group on a weekend outing, trip, etc., try to go. You will really get to know the post or group. Look to the future of each post or group. How many participants will be available next year? What is the post's or group's plan for recruiting new youth participants.

If major problems arise, such as the Advisor or Classroom teacher is being transferred, get help. Talk to the head of the organization, service team chairman, or Exploring executive to determine what action to take.

Keep in mind that your task is to be a friend to the Advisor and Classroom teacher, offer what help you can, but not to be the leader.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Is *Learning for Life* being represented as a unique character and career education program?

What can be done to help existing posts and groups improve the quality of their program experiences?

Are new posts and groups being organized with a commitment to active involvement and hands-on activities rather than lecture?

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to discuss any contact they have had with Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups. What did they see? What reaction did they have?

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Let's review the "Keys to Success" for a *Learning for Life* Service team volunteer (See "Keys to Success," Service Section, *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*)

Be Informed

Take training - attend the Learning for Life's service team conference, Advisor basic training sessions, service team meetings, and other opportunities. Learn as much as you can about *Learning for Life*. Review the basic Exploring literature, especially the *Explorer Leader Handbook* and *Learning for Life Curriculum Books*. Keep up-to-date on local and national *Learning for Life* activities, awards, and events. Keep your *posts and groups* informed.

Support the Advisor and Classroom teacher

Serve as the Advisor's and Classroom teacher's coach and counselor. Be aware of his or her concerns and challenges. Build a strong, friendly relationship. Work with and not around, the Advisor and Classroom teacher.

Be Sensitive

Do more listening than talking. Determine the needs and desires of post or group youth participants. Does the post or group program satisfy them? Will the long-range program of the post or group meet the objectives of the participating organization and *Learning for Life*?

Seek Resources

Continually look for people, places, and things that might improve the post or group program: ideas, trips, service projects, speakers, programs, money-earning projects, etc.

Involve Others

Don't let the Advisor and Classroom teacher become a "one-person" show. Suggest ways to involve the post or group committee, parents, and consultants from participating organizations with the post or group. Urge that new adults continually be recruited to help. Look for ways to inform parents about the post or group and *Learning for Life*.

Encourage Participation

Get the Advisor and Classroom teacher to meet other Advisors and Classroom teachers to share ideas and experiences. Learning for Life activities are designed to support and improve the post or group program. Urge the Advisor and Classroom teacher and officers to attend meetings, conferences, and training that will increase their understanding of *Learning for Life*.

Encourage Post Officer Training

The Advisor's main function is to train the post officers. Help where needed to inform the Advisor about elections, training, and guidance of officers. The Advisor conducts the post officers' seminar to train the post officers and plan their program. Your support is the key to his or her planning of this event.

Represent Learning for Life

The service team is the main link between the Learning for Life office and the Explorer post or Learning for Life group. You represent the best interests of both. Help the Advisor and Classroom teacher understand the purpose, policies, structure, and financial needs of Learning for Life.

Give Recognition

Look for ways to recognize the Advisor and Classroom teacher, the post or group, and the participating organization. Use publicity, letter of congratulations, thank-you certificates, or whatever means that are available. In particular, be sure the Advisor and Classroom teacher feels his or her leadership is important, successful and appreciated.

Solve Problems

When needs, problems, or challenges arise, try to solve them on the spot. If necessary, get the advice and help of your service team chair, other service team volunteers, Advisors and Classroom teachers of other *posts and groups*, adult volunteers of the Learning for Life committee, and your Exploring or Learning for Life executive. Some solutions may need special skills in human relations - others may cause conflict or controversy. Of paramount concern would be what is best for the young adults? What will improve the post or group?

AUDIOVISUAL

*(Show "Explorer Youth Fast Start Video, No.AV-09V028)
This training video is designed to help new youth leaders understand the dimensions and dynamics of their role in Explorer posts. The Advisor should present it to post officers during their post officers' seminar.*

WHAT DO WE DO IF?

Ask service team volunteers participants to discuss what they should do if the following situations arise. Possible answers follow each question (See "Troubleshooting Guide, Service Section in the "Learning for Life Executive Guidebook").

What Do We Do if the Post or Group Stops Meeting?

Call the Advisor and Classroom teacher to arrange a meeting of the post or group committee and any others who might help. Urge them to plan a reorganizing meeting to salvage the post or group. Help them plan programs to get the post or group back together. Contact your Exploring or Learning for Life executive.

What Do We Do if the Advisor or Guidance Counselor Quits?

Call the post or group committee chair or the participating organization's head person. Help take steps to recruit a new Advisor or Classroom teacher. Contact your Exploring or Learning for Life executive.

What Do We Do if There Is No Active Post or Group Committee?

This is a common problem and may not be easy to solve. With the Advisor and Classroom teacher, call on the participating organization head, urging that steps be taken to recruit a new post or group committee. Set up a training meeting for the new post or group committee.

What if Attendance Starts to Drop?

Obviously due to weak program, communications, and weak or untrained post officers. Urge leaders to plan some exciting activities, send notices, and call former youth participants. Develop a plan to recruit new youth participants if necessary.

What if the Advisor or

**Classroom teacher
Isn't Effective?**

Is the Advisor and Classroom teacher trained? If not, set up training sessions. Take him or her to meet with another Advisor and Classroom teacher. Visit other *posts and groups*. As a last resort, carefully suggest to the committee and or participating organization that a new Advisor should be recruited.

**What if the Post or Group
Isn't Going to Renew
On Time?**

Immediately discover who has the enrollment rosters and what is holding them up. Hand-carry the rosters through the re-enrollment process and bring them to your Exploring or Learning for Life executive.

Discuss the budget plan and fund-raising opportunities, etc. It is not uncommon for a post or group treasury to pay the youth participant fees.

Discuss any other situations that might arise and where the *service team volunteer* can get help.

**SERVICE TEAM
OPERATIONS**

(Handout Organization Charts -- Reproduced from the Introduction Section, "Learning for Life Executive Guidebook")

Let's review what the service team does and how the marketing and program teams support our effort.

What is important is that post or group meetings and activities match the priorities and needs of the youth participants and that the Learning for Life office meets the needs of its Explorer *posts and Learning for Life groups*. Therefore operations of the service team calls for:

**Monthly Service
to Posts and Groups**

1. Post or Group Visit
2. Troubleshooting
3. Annual Post or Group Inventory
4. Renew Post or Group When Due

**Reorganization
of Posts and Groups**

1. Recruiting New Leaders
2. Support Open House Planning

3. Attend Post or Group Open House
4. Enroll New Youth Participants

Note how the marketing and program teams are structured to support each other. For example, ideally the *service team volunteer* could request that the program team train new leaders as needed during the post or group organization process.

THE ANNUAL POST OR GROUP INVENTORY

Let's discuss one of the key functions in Service Team operations -- the annual post or group inventory. Each spring, the service team inventories each post and group following the guidelines in the "Annual Post or Group Inventory Worksheet," Service Section *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*. Our objective is to determine the leadership, youth participation, and program needs of all posts and groups.

The average post or group may have their lowest youth participation at the end of May due to graduation, summer tasks, families moving, etc.

It is important that the Advisor and Classroom teacher and the participating organization recognize that this is normal and not due to some failure on their part. At this point, that post or group should decide to:

Plan a summertime superactivity

Continue with regular meetings, realizing that attendance may be small.

Plan a few major activities, tours, outings, etc. for the remaining youth participants.

Develop plans to recruit new youth participants.

ANNUAL INVENTORY PLAN OF ACTION

Before school ends is the most critical time to the existence of a post or group. Without the careful guidance of the service team, a post or group could disappear. The service team should implement the following plan of action to strengthen each post or group, starting with the annual post or group inventory.

1. Before school ends, the service team meets with the Advisor and officers to determine what they will do during the summer. If the officers will not carry over through next fall, new ones must be elected.

2. The service team arranges a meeting with the Advisor and Classroom teacher and post or group committee to begin plans to strengthen the post or group by doing the following:

The past year is reviewed and plans for next year are evaluated.

Additional leadership is recruited if needed. Training for these new leaders is planned.

Careful plans are laid for next fall including a letter of invitation and a good post or group Open House for new youth participants. This is very important.

3. The Advisor and Classroom teacher and post or group officers meet to review plans.

4. Before the end of August, the service team gets information from the career interest survey for each prospective participant. The participating organization writes a letter of invitation to each prospective new participant inviting him or her to come to the post's Open House in the fall. The Exploring or Learning for Life executive will provide the service team with the information and advise on how many to invite. The letter of invitation must be carefully done. Sample of an effective letter is included in the *Exploring Sales Kit and the Explorer Leader Handbook*.

5. Final arrangements are made for the post or group Open House and subsequent post or group activities.

6. The *service team volunteer* or Learning for Life representative at the post or group Open House explains the Learning for Life Program and that all new youth participants must enroll that night.

7. At the next post or group meeting, the *service team volunteer* ensures that all new youth participants are enrolled and the rosters and fees are sent to the Learning for Life office.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOUR POSTS AND GROUPS SUCCEED

Briefly review any of the following items that pertain to your Learning for Life office. Add any not on the list. For each item:

- *Make a brief statement or definition of what it is.*
 - *Identify how it will improve post or group program.*
 - *Tell where to get further information.*
1. The local Learning for Life office. Review services, facilities, and staff support provided through working with volunteer committees.
 2. *Explorer Post New-Advisor Kit.* Review contents of kit: Post Start-Up Orientation (Advisor Fast Start), Exploring Program Development Guide, Character Education Activities CD ROM, Character Education In Exploring Flier, and What's In It For Youth Flier.
 3. Training. Review *Learning for Life Leadership Training Plan* from Program Section, *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*. Training is provided to post Advisors and Classroom teachers as posts and groups are organized..
 4. Quarterly Advisors and Classroom teachers meeting. (See "Quarterly Meetings," Training Section, *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*.)
 5. The Learning for Life Program Conference. (See "The Learning for Life Program Conference," Program Section, *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*.)
 6. Learning for Life council/district activities. (See "Typical Learning for Life Activities," Program Section, *Learning for Life Executive Guidebook*.)

**LFL CHARACTER
EDUCATION OUTCOMES
TO HELP YOUTH
PARTICIPANTS
SUCCEED**

(Distribute and review this page.)

Learning for Life K-12th grade curriculum and Exploring programs develop students with the following character education outcomes:

- 1. Caring/Fairness**
Forgive others, help people in need, express gratitude, and be kind.
- 2. Citizenship**
Obey laws and rules, respect authority, stay informed, cooperate.
- 3. Courage**
Accepting consequences, standing up for me, and sticking to what's right.
- 4. Honesty/Trust**
Don't deceive, cheat or steal, build a good reputation, be reliable.
- 5. Life Skills**
Basic art, classic literature, clean air and water, communication, fire safety, money management, personal habits, physical fitness, places and maps, safety, transpiration, weather, youth protection.
- 6. Perseverance**
Never give up and overcome poor decisions.
- 7. Respect**
Be tolerant of differences and be considerate of others' feelings.
- 8. Responsibility**
Do what you are supposed to do, be accountable, and persevere.
- 9. Self-discipline**
Anger/conflict management, build self-confidence, coping with stress, develop listening skills, self-awareness, and setting goals.

**VALUE ADDED
RESOURCES TO HELP
YOUR POSTS AND
GROUPS SUCCEED**

(Provided by LFL Staff & Volunteers) The Learning for Life representative will serve as the catalyst between selected businesses, industries, or professional associations and local schools to provide students access to practical career opportunity experiences. The following types of career experiences are available through Learning for Life value added connecting activities:

- Organize seminars, workshops, tours of local business and industry, arrange for speakers, and coordinate career fairs where applicable.
- Recruit school seminar volunteers, mentors, and role models and provide speaker orientation and training.
- Working with local colleges and universities, develop strong and integrated career programs.
- Provide monitoring, documentation, and evaluation of the *Senior High School Career Seminar* programs.
- Provide camp outdoor resources for retreats, career conferences, and life skill workshops.
- Conduct COPE courses for developing team building, leadership, self-reliance, respect for self and others, and self-esteem.
- Develop community-wide service projects such as food drives, crime prevention programs, and service learning activities.
- Encourage students to apply for Exploring scholarships.

DISCUSSION

Discuss value added type programs that your council offers LFL curriculum based programs and Exploring.

Distribute and review the “What’s In It For Youth” flier from page 16.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOUTH?

WHAT	VALUE ADDED	RESOURCES
Leadership Development	Accomplish the Task Activity Chairs Conducting Activities Elected Youth Officers Keep the Group Together Making Decisions Planning Programs Responsibility for Actions	Challenge Initiative Games Cooperative Games <i>Explorer Leader Handbook</i> Post Leader Workshop Post Officers' Seminar Problem Solving Games
Career Goals Self-awareness	Exploring's Five Areas of Program Emphasis: Career Opportunities Character Education Service Learning Life Skills Leadership Experience	How To Guides in the <i>Explorer Leader Handbook</i> Career Cluster Program Guides for: Arts & Humanities, Aviation, Business, Communications, Engineering, Fire & Emergency Service, Health, Law, Law Enforcement, Science, Skill Trades and Social Services
Conflict Resolution Drug Abuse Prevention	Character Education Forums Drug Abuse Seminar	Character Education Activities
Hands-on Career Activities Personal Development Self-esteem Self-reliance Problem Solving Skills Take Responsibility	How to Seminars for: Brainstorming, Developing Service Projects, Earning Money, Generating Publicity Introducing a Speaker, Leading a Discussion, Making a Speech, Planning a Post Super-activity, Teaching a Skill, Using Parliamentary Procedure	Character Education Activities <i>Explorer Leader Handbook</i> Explorer Post Program Guides Five Emphasis Program Areas Program Development Guide
Goal Setting	Teach How We Can Mold Opportunities in Life Program Planning Conference Scholarships for Explorers	<i>Explorer Leader Handbook</i> Scholarship Applications
Caring Environment Positive Alternative to Gangs	Peer Helping Youth Protection Program	Character Education Activities Facts Every Teen Should Know About Sexual Abuse Youth Protection/Personal Safety Awareness Video
Belonging to the Right Group	Learning for Life Programs	www.learning-for-life.org

(GO TO CLOSING ON LAST PAGE IF SERVICE TEAM VOLUNTEERS HAVE COMPLETED "Adult Explorer Leader Basic Training.")

THE LEARNING FOR LIFE EXPLORING PROGRAM

The mission statement of **Learning for Life** is to serve others by helping to instill core values in young people and in other ways prepare them to make ethical choices throughout their lives so they can achieve their full potential.

In fulfilling this mission, *Learning for Life*'s purpose is to provide experiences to help young people mature at this stage in their lives and to prepare them to become responsible and caring adults. Youth participants are ready to explore the meaning of interdependence in their relationships with other youth, Advisors, Classroom teachers, and with the community.

Learning for Life is based on a unique and dynamic relationship between participating organizations and the youth in that community. Local participating organizations initiate a specific post or group, and they do this by matching the people and program resources within their own organizations to the interests of young people in the surrounding community. The result is a program of activities that helps the youth pursue their special interests and grow and develop.

The *Learning for Life* Exploring program has four specific goals. Explorers should:

1. Gain practical experience in a career interest or skill.
2. Engage in a program of activities centered on the five emphasis areas (career opportunities, life skills, service learning, character education, leadership experience) to encourage the development of the whole person.
3. Experience positive leadership from adult and youth leaders and be given opportunities to take on leadership roles.
4. Have a chance to learn and grow in a supportive, caring, and fun environment.

THE METHODS OF EXPLORING

These "methods" have been carefully chosen to meet the needs of young adults.

1. Voluntary association between youth and adults. Because Learning for Life programs are voluntary, youth are receptive to new ideas, experiences, and relationships. For the youth, these relationships provide a caring environment, a connection to new ways of thinking, and a new identity as a responsible young adult.
2. Ethical decision making. By asking young people to be responsible for themselves, for a program of activity and experiences, and for other people, Learning for Life provides numerous opportunities for decision making and ethical choice. With the influence of capable adults and structured activities youth learn to make effective and ethical decisions.
3. Group activity. Learning for Life activities are interdependent group experiences in which success is dependent on the cooperation of all.
4. Recognition of achievement. This recognition might come through formal awards, but youth participants also achieve it through adult acknowledgment of the young person's competence and ability.
5. Democratic Process. Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups provide exposure to democratic ideals and skills that are needed throughout life.
6. Learning for Life is about curiosity, exploration, and adventure. This happens through new experiences that provide opportunities for new skills and meaningful participation in action oriented activities.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPLORING

What is Leadership?

Leadership is one of the primary qualities that is developed through Learning for Life . The word "leadership"

has been used to mean many different things. The way we use it in Learning for Life is very simple.

Remember the mission of Learning for Life. "It is the mission of **Learning for Life** to serve others..."In Learning for Life this service is focused on the development of leadership in youth participants. The goal of all Learning for Life activity is the development of leadership in each post's or group's youth participant. As an Advisor and Classroom teacher, post or group committee participant, or consultant their role is the leadership development of the Explorers.

Every Explorer post or group has to decide what its goals are, how it is going to carry them out, and then actually do it. These activities require leadership of two kinds. One set of leadership skills is focused on getting these things done. Explorers learn how to make decisions, how to plan activities, and what is involved in actually being responsible for doing it.

Another set of leadership skills is focused on relationships between and among Explorers and officers. A good leader learns the value of working cooperatively with other people, making activities fun, communicating, listening, and all those things that make relationships work.

How Do You Become This Kind Of Leader?

Remember the role for adult Explorer leaders is to help develop leadership skills and abilities in the youth participants. The two best ways to learn leadership are to see others exercise leadership and to be put in a position where you have to be a leader. In Learning for Life, both are possible. Every youth sees other youth participants, officers, Advisors, and Classroom teachers exercising leadership. If done right, they will learn by exposure to excellent leadership role models.

The other way, learning by doing, is easy to imagine for Advisors, Classroom teachers, and officers. By being placed in a position where they are responsible for activities and other people they have to learn to be a leader.

But what about everybody else? Here is where we come back to our understanding of the purpose of Learning for Life and the meaning of leadership. Learning for Life is about the development of post or group youth participants, specifically the

development of leadership. To develop leadership in all youth they have to be provided with opportunities to be leaders-to plan and carry out activities and to make relationships work. Youth participants who aren't officers can still be activity chairs or on activity committees. They are also still responsible for supporting their post or group program by working on the development of relationships with other post or group youth participants and actively participating. While doing so, they are developing leadership skills. Officers should help find a place for each person in their post to be actively included.

Leadership is not something invested in just one person or a small group of persons in the post or group. One activity requires a variety of different leadership actions. All the different leadership functions can be shared among several post or group youth participants at the same time.

Learning Through Experiences

If it isn't obvious to you already, youth participants learn by doing through active participation. The best way to learn is by trying something, not by watching someone else or being told about it. Youth learn how to work on computers, how to sing, how to make paper or sail a boat-not by reading or hearing about it, but by doing it. Being involved means that they will be more interested, more challenged and motivated and more likely to remember the experience.

Youth also learn how to be a leader-not by watching someone else, but by doing it. Youth learn to make ethical decisions, to plan an event, to communicate, or to encourage others by being in a position where those skills and actions are necessary.

REFLECTION

Why Do Reflection?

We can make our experiences more meaningful and effective if we reflect on them. In Learning for Life , reflection is simply the process of the group talking about their experience immediately afterwards.

Why Is Reflection Important?

Reflection helps make sure that Explorers did learn from their experience. If people are confused about what happened or misinterpreted, sometimes reflection helps correct the problem.

Reflection provides an opportunity for everyone in the group to have input into what happened and input into the next event. Unless we plan times in which everyone gets a chance for input, it is possible that those individuals who are less assertive or confident may not ever say anything, even if they have valuable insights.

Reflection allows everyone to hear someone else's perspective. Even though the group may have done the same activity, each individual may have a little different insight or experience of that activity. By sharing that with other people youth learn to be confident in their own contribution. They also learn to listen to and think about the way other youth think and feel.

Reflection provides opportunities to develop skills of thinking about and making moral and ethical judgments. Because the topic of a reflection is often the relationships between group participants, moral issues frequently arise. Youth must learn to think about the ethical implications of their own behavior, and their responsibility to others.

Reflection improves the quality of activities and experiences. Because post participants have the opportunity for input, each succeeding activity will be more successful than the last, if their suggestions are taken seriously.

Finally, reflection helps develop a caring community in the post or group. Through listening to others and understanding them, post or group participants will be more likely to care about the well being of each other.

See the *Explorer Leader Handbook* for more information about reflection.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT AND YOUTH PROTECTION

The development of youth participants needs to take place in a safe environment. This is sometimes referred to in Learning for Life as a Caring Environment. As the Service team volunteer for Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups, it means that we have a responsibility for ensuring that the youth participants in their post or group are protected from harm.

One way to do this is to make sure that activities are planned well and that youth participants have the skills they need to be successful.

Second, be alert to the harm that people do to each other. Learning for Life has developed a Youth Protection Program. This is described in the appendix of the Advisor section of the *Explorer Leader Handbook*.

(Review "Youth Protection" from Explorer Leader Handbook)

However, creating a caring environment goes further than protecting the Explorers in their post or group from abuse. It also means that every youth participant is emotionally safe—from putdowns to intimidation, hazing, harassment, and exclusive peer groups. Many young adults experience the world as a harsh and cold place. Learning for Life should be a place where they are accepted and where they can be themselves.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Character education development occurs in every aspect of the *Learning for Life* program. Because the program operates on the basis of a partnership between youth participants and Advisors or Classroom teachers, post or group participants are continually involved in making decisions and choices. Almost every decision and choice has a moral and ethical dimension. "Is this fair to other post or group youth participants?" "Am I treating other post or group youth participants like I would want to be treated?" "Am I being honest?"

Not only do these choices involve ethics, youth participants also experience the consequences and results of their ethical or unethical behavior. They begin to understand what the thoughtless or thoughtful behavior of others feels like.

Because of these choices and experiencing of the consequences, youth participants further develop their ability to make moral and ethical judgments.

Through Structured Activities

You can encourage ethical thinking in Learning for Life by planning "Character Education Forums" and "Character

Education Activities" into your post's or group's yearly program. A "Character Education Forum" is a post or group meeting devoted to learning about the values, norms, and ethical standards that govern the profession or interest area of your post or group.

Many posts and groups do this by inviting an expert to speak to the post or group. He or she could discuss the ethical standards that are adhered to by the professional organizations, his or her own personal standards, and the consequences for breaking the rules.

A "Character Education Activity" is a program activity in which these ethical dilemmas are used to provoke youth into deeper thought about their profession or career area. Every ethical controversy involves a conflict between at least two different moral principals. In the "Character Education" activity, youth participants are assigned one of the two positions and debate the merits of the position with someone else who takes the opposite side. After the initial debate, they switch positions and debate it again. Eventually they try to come to a consensus.

This fun, semi-competitive process encourages a natural enthusiasm for thought about ethical issues. It also helps develop empathy and understanding of the ideas and thoughts of other people.

You can learn more about "Character Education Activities" by reading the instructions in the appendix of the *Explorer Leader Handbook*.

CLOSING

The continuing success of Learning for Life across America is directly dependent upon the service we provide our Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups. Welcome to *Learning for Life*'s service team. Your efforts will improve and expand Learning for Life's potential to serve the youth of America. Your efforts are vital to the participating organizations that have organized Explorer posts and Learning for Life groups. They need your help to keep active and productive posts and groups. Congratulations for agreeing to serve on the *Learning for Life* service team and accepting the challenge to keep your posts and groups alive and healthy.

END OF SESSION